



Showroom
678 Broadway, 5th floor
NY, NY 10012

Future Variations
March 26, 2022 - May 21, 2022

Susan Brockman
Ray Johnson
Rosemary Mayer
Kamau Amu Patton
Sara VanDerBeek
Stan VanDerBeek
Alisha B. Wormsley
Alisha B. Wormsley and Li Harris

Soft Network's Spring programming, *Future Variations*, will be presented at Showroom, an experimental, collaborative space shared between artist estate leaders, art historians, artists and fashion workers, allowing for opportunities to build direct and indirect conversations between cultural platforms. *Future Variations* includes artwork and ephemera from select resident estates and archives combined with contributions by contemporary artists organized by visual artist and co-founder of Soft Network, Sara VanDerBeek.

For the exhibition at Showroom Kamau Amu Patton presents *Transition/Discontinuity (Dance for Camera)* a moving-image record of a performance at Mills College in 2009. Realized through software designed by Patton with Bay Area programmers, the video is the result of live capture and processing of dance movements to generate new sound and image sequences. Also included is his *Field Drawing*, 2011 and a new self portrait *Phosphor I*, 2021. An installation of quilted textile and image works by Alisha B. Wormsley includes imagery from her ongoing *Children of Nan* archive. Her collaborative video work with Li Harris, *Journey to Pythia*, 2022 will also be screening. Both works feature performers, artists and family members from Wormsley's Pittsburgh community.

The interdisciplinary works included by Patton and Wormsley as well as the archival works on view such as an original photograph from Susan Brockman's 1974 experimental film *Depot* - described by the artist as an homage and satire of Ruth St. Denis' elaborate photographic tableau - and a collage made during the publishing of Stan VanDerBeek's 1965 manifesto *Culture Intercom*, propose the generative nature of re-mediation and re-performance.

Collage, as an expansive and inclusive practice that is accumulative and at times interactive is enacted in various ways by all the artists included in

Future Variations. Works range in time and approach yet all are driven by a desire to engage and connect with the larger community. Examples include an early Ray Johnson collage or "motico" created shortly after his time at Black Mountain College using fragments from previous artworks; four selected works from Rosemary Mayer's *In Time Order*, in which various personal photographic images are included with mixed-media textual renderings; and Sara VanDerBeek's new kinetic, two-part photographic work, *Future Variations II*.

The presentation at Showroom will evolve over the course of the exhibition with new works being added at different intervals such as the installation of Rosemary Mayer's 1974 sculpture *Portae*. The space will also be used at times as a workshop by the exhibition's contemporary participants, Kamau Amu Patton, Sara VanDerBeek and Alisha B. Wormsley, to interpret and re-imagine past works of their own and of others. This will culminate in a workshop/performance by the artists exploring *Variations V*, a collaborative intermedia work from 1965 and the inspiration for *Future Variations*.

Variations V, combined film, dance, animation and sound into a sensorial and durational experience. Led by John Cage and Merce Cunningham with moving images by Nam June Paik and Stan VanDerBeek, the project brought together over fifteen practitioners from experimental dance, sound and moving image for a simultaneous live and mediated performance. The progressive nature of this historical work and what it proposed encourages the furthering of its experimentation, interfaces and outcomes.

Collaborative engagements amongst the artists as well as the estates and archives currently working in Showroom, including the Estate of Rosemary Mayer, Estate of Susan Brockman and Stan VanDerBeek Archive, will inform a series of events, performances and discussions around archival interactions and interpretation as a collective transfer of knowledge between past and present practitioners.

All programming will be presented in-person as well as for transmission. Showroom is open to the public during scheduled events and by appointment. Please email softnetworkemail@gmail.com to arrange a visit or check softnetwork.art for the weekly schedule and event recordings.

Scheduled Saturdays and Related Programming

April 9th - Saturday Showroom open 12-6

April 30th - Rosemary Mayer installation of *Portae* open 2-7

May 7th - Saturday Showroom open 12-6

May 16th - *Future Variations* - Workshop/Performance by Sara VanDerBeek, Jasmine Hearn, Miriam Parker, Kamau Amu Patton, Alisha B. Wormsley and Stan VanDerBeek Archive among others

June 6th - Susan Brockman screening at Anthology Film Archives

Collaborator Bios

Showroom is a shared space for experimentation, exhibitions and collective realization of archival projects and contemporary inter-media works. Showroom is adjacent to a consortium of artists' estates, art historians and artists operating in a collaboratively-shared studio space. Activities support and promote the work of the artist estates-in-residence while offering a platform and services for newly forming estates and foundations. Current participants include Chelsea Spengemann and Sara VanDerBeek of Soft Network, the Stan Vanderbeek Archive and Estate of Susan Brockman; Marie Warsh and Max Warsh of the Estate of Rosemary Mayer and Shirley Gorelick Foundation; and designer Rachel Comey, who has collaborated with Soft Network since March 2021. Through this initiative, the participants aim to continue the legacy of these artists and their interests in developing alternative gallery models and exhibition strategies and experimenting with ideas of social engagement, interactivity, and ephemeral art practices.

Showroom will be open to the public by appointment and for special events such as screenings, performances and exhibitions as well as for research related to the artist's estates and archives being managed on site.

Soft Network is a cooperative platform established by Chelsea Spengemann and Sara VanDerBeek in 2021 for connective arts programming with a focus on photography, film, installation and performance. Soft Network aims to explore and enact ways in which the archive and archival interactions can become integral modes of exchange, collaboration and commerce. Through programming, editions and partnerships, Soft Network seeks to provide opportunities for living artists and representatives of non-living artists to support each other through the sharing of resources, labor and profits.

Susan Brockman (1937-2001) was a filmmaker and photographer active in NYC and Easthampton, NY from the 1960s-1990s. She received her MFA in painting from Cornell University, NY in 1958, studied photography with Diane Arbus in 1973 and cinematography at New York University in 1974. Brockman was an active member of the collective Women/Artist/Filmmakers and she lectured at the School of Visual Arts, NY; New York Public Library; Montclair State College, NJ; and the University of Cincinnati, OH. She received numerous grants in her lifetime including awards from Jerome Foundation; National Endowment for The Arts; and State Council on the Arts.

Brockman's films include *Soul of A Dog* (1987), based on a Franz Kafka short story; *Stopped in Her Tracks* (1982) and *Lee's Ferry* (1983), both made in collaboration with choreographer Sally Gross; *Hothouse Flower* (1978); and *Depot* (1974). Her photographic work was featured in exhibitions with Atsuko Murayama Fine Arts, NY and Japan; Jan Van der Donk Gallery, NY; Exit Art, NY; Rhode Island School of Design; and Byron Gallery, NY. Her photographic cards on vellum were featured exclusively at Barneys, NY.

Brockman was editor of *Arts Magazine* from 1966-68 and worked with a wide range of influential figures in the film and art worlds throughout her career including Willem DeKooning, Robert Frank, Ralph Gibson, Dan Graham, Sally Gross, Peter Hujar, Mark Obenhaus, Kazuko Oshima, Robert Rauschenberg, Linda Rosenkrantz, Danny Seymour and Anita Thacher among others. She was the editor for numerous films including *Stockhausen's Originale: Doubletakes* (Peter Moore, 1964-1994); *Ma: Space/Time in the Garden of Ryoan-Ji* (Takahiko Iimura, 1989); *Einstein On the Beach: The Changing Image of Opera* (Mark Obenhaus, 1985); *The Wizard of Waukesha - A Film About Les Paul* (Catherine Orentreich, 1980); *ONO* (Danny Seymour, 1970); *Life-raft Earth* (Robert Frank, 1969); among others.

Brockman's artwork is in the permanent collections of the Hirshhorn Museum & Sculpture Garden, Washington D.C. and the Smith College Museum of Art in Northampton, MA. Her papers are also held at Smith College.

Ray Johnson (1927- 1995) Throughout the early stage of his career and spanning its duration, Ray Johnson sought out the random and the ephemeral, incorporating chance operations into his artistic practice with "mail art." He gradually built up an informal, hybrid network of friends, acquaintances, and strangers with whom he exchanged ideas and artworks by means of the postal system. By 1958, he began to write, "Please send to..." on his mailings, thereby creating even more sub-networks among the hundreds of correspondents in his greater mail art organization. By 1962, when it was named the "New York Correspondance [sic] School," his virtual "school" of correspondents had become a network for a web of communication by mail that eventually spread across the nation and around the globe.

Johnson was an early instigator of performance art, actively participating in events by James Waring and Susan Kaufman, among others, and staging his own starting in 1957 that included "Funeral Music for Elvis Presley" and "Lecture on Modern Music." Johnson's compositions were performed at The Living Theatre and during events such as the Fluxus "Yam Festival" of 1963. From 1961 on, Johnson periodically staged events he called "Nothings," described to his friend William S. Wilson as "an attitude as opposed to a happening," which would parallel the "Happenings" of Allan Kaprow and later Fluxus events. The first of these, "Nothing by Ray Johnson," was part of a weekly series of events in July 1961 at AG Gallery, a venue in New York operated by George Maciunas and Almus Salcius. Ed Plunkett later recalled entering an empty room: ". . . Visitors began to enter the premises. Most of them looked quite dismayed that nothing was going on . . . Well, finally Ray arrived . . . and he brought with him a large corrugated cardboard box of wooden spools. Soon after arriving Ray emptied this box of spools down the staircase ... with these ... one had to step cautiously to avoid slipping ... I was delighted with this gesture." Johnson's second Nothing took place at Maidman Playhouse, New York, in 1962. Furthermore, the carefully orchestrated circumstances of his suicide on Friday the 13th, 1995 have prompted the suggestion that the process of his drowning was his "final performance." [From Estate of Ray Johnson]

Rosemary Mayer (1943–2014) was a prolific artist involved in the New York art scene beginning in the late 1960s. Most well-known for her large-scale sculptures using fabric as the primary material, she also created works on paper, artist books, and outdoor installations, exploring themes of temporality, history, and biography. She was initially involved in conceptual art and writing, collaborating with her sister, poet Bernadette Mayer, and husband, Vito Acconci, on the journal *O TO 9*. A pioneer of the feminist art movement, she was a founding member of A.I.R. Gallery, the first cooperative gallery for women in the U.S. and had one of the earliest shows there. During the 1970s and 1980s, her work was also shown at many New York alternative art spaces, including The Clocktower, Sculpture Center, and Franklin Furnace, and in university galleries throughout the country. Mayer was also a critic and writer, contributing essays to various journals of artists writings, including *White Walls* and *Heresies* and produced an issue of the avant-garde magazine *Art Rite* in 1977. Her translation of the diary of Mannerist artist Jacopo da Pontormo, accompanied by essays and a catalog of her work, was published in 1982.

In 2016, Southfirst Gallery in Brooklyn exhibited a selection of Mayer's work from the late 1960s and early 1970s. The first major exhibition of her work in over thirty years, it was reviewed in *The New York Times*, *Art in America*, *The New Yorker*, and *Artforum.com*. A version of this show was exhibited at the Lamar Dodd School of Art at the University of Georgia in 2017. Her work has been included in several group exhibitions in New York including at Nicelle Beauchene Gallery, Murray Guy Gallery, and Bridget Donahue. Recent publications include *Temporary Monuments* (2018), focused on her ephemeral installations, published by Sobercove Press and the second edition of *Excerpts from the 1971 Journal of Rosemary Mayer* (2020), also by Sobercove. In 2020, her work was introduced to European audiences through Nick Mauss's exhibition, "Bizarre Silks, Private Imaginings and Narrative Facts, etc.," at Kunsthalle Basel and "Rods Bent Into Bows," at ChertLüdde in Berlin. The show in Berlin was Mayer's first solo show in Europe; it won the prestigious VBKI Prize for Berlin galleries and was included in Frieze magazine's list of the best shows in Europe. A solo show at Gordon Robichaux in summer 2021, entitled "Pleasures and Possible Celebrations," focused on her installations with balloons and related work.

The first institutional survey of her work, "Ways of Attaching," opened at the Swiss Institute in New York in Fall of 2021. It was reviewed in various publications, including *Artforum*, *The New York Review of Books*, *The London Review of Books*, and *The Brooklyn Rail*. The show was organized in partnership with Ludwig Forum, Aachen; Lenbachhaus, Munich; and Spike Island, Bristol, where the exhibition will travel in 2022. Forthcoming publications in 2022 include a catalogue for "Ways of Attaching" and a book of letters between Mayer and her sister Bernadette.

Mayer's work is in the collection of the Museum of Modern Art, New York; Lenbachhaus, Munich; and numerous private collections.

The Estate of Rosemary Mayer is represented by Gordon Robichaux, New York and ChertLüdde, Berlin.

Kamau Amu Patton is an interdisciplinary artist and educator whose work examines history and culture through engagement with archives, documents, stories, and sites. Patton's projects are dialogic and take form as expanded field conversations. Patton received his MFA from Stanford University in 2007 and received a degree in Sociology from the University of Pennsylvania. His work was shown in 2012 as part of Pacific Standard Time and in 2013 as part of the Machine Project Field guide to LA Architecture. Patton has completed projects in soundscape studies through support provided by the State University of New York at Buffalo, the Mellon Elemental Arts Initiative, and the Tang Teaching Museum. He presented research in 2016 at the ABF house in Stockholm, Sweden, as a part of The Shape of Co- to- Come symposium and exhibition. Patton participated in a series of performances as part of Projects 107: Lone Wolf Recital Corps at the Museum of Modern Art in August 2017. In September 2017, he installed an iteration of his ongoing project, Tel, at the Tang Museum. In 2019, Patton's public art commission with the Bowman Montessori School in Palo Alto, CA, was open to the public. In 2020 Patton was an artist in residence at Coaxial Arts Foundation in Los Angeles. And, he was a 2020 Archive Artist in Residence at Experimental Sound Studio in Chicago. Utilizing recordings from the Sun Ra / El Saturn Collection, Patton created "The Past & Other Dreams", a double cassette produced by the artist in collaboration with the Creative Audio Archive at ESS. A box set LP of Patton's arrangements of Terry Adkins's Lone Wolf Recital Corps Recitals, "Second Mind and Alto Age", was released in partnership with the Pulitzer Arts Foundation in 2021.

Sara VanDerBeek (born 1976) lives and works in New York. VanDerBeek's work has been the subject of solo exhibitions at the Minneapolis Institute of Art; Black Mountain College Museum and Arts Center, Asheville, North Carolina (with Stan VanDerBeek); the Baltimore Museum of Art; Museum Boijmans van Beuningen, Rotterdam; the Museum of Contemporary Art, Cleveland; the Hammer Museum, Los Angeles; the Whitney Museum of American Art, New York; Fondazione Memmo, Rome; Metro Pictures, New York; Altman Siegel, San Francisco and the Approach, London. Her work was included in the inaugural New Visions Triennial for Photography and New Media at the Henie Onstad Art Center, Høvikodden, Norway (2020). Recent exhibitions include *Chorus*, 2021, a solo exhibition at Altman Siegel Gallery, SF; *New Time: Art and Feminisms in the Twenty-First Century*, Berkeley Art Museum and Pacific Film Archive, CA (2021-2022); *Sara VanDerBeek, Sari Dienes and Carolee Schneemann: Up To and Including Her Limits*, Halsey McKay Gallery, East Hampton, NY (2021); *The Artist's Museum*, Boston I.C.A.; and *Photo Poetics* at the Kunsthalle Berlin and the Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York. VanDerBeek will begin the Smithsonian Artist Research Fellowship in Spring 2022.

Stan VanDerBeek (1927-1984) studied visual art at The Cooper Union for the Advancement of Science and Art, New York and then at Black Mountain College in Asheville, North Carolina, receiving honorary doctorates from both schools in 1957 and 1972, respectively. He began his artistic career as a painter but soon moved on to create award-winning experimental films and videos as well as

numerous multimedia installations. VanDerBeek's research into developing visual languages as ways of communication led him to seek out collaborations with pioneers in the fields of film technology, television broadcast, digital media, and computers. He served as an artist-in-residence and instructor at a number of organizations and research universities during his artistic career. He was a professor of art and film at University of Maryland, Baltimore County from 1975 until his death in 1984.

VanDerBeek's work is represented in public collections worldwide, including the Museum of Modern Art, New York; Whitney Museum of American Art, New York; Walker Art Center, Minneapolis; Centre Pompidou, Paris; Art Institute of Chicago; Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofia, Madrid; Los Angeles County Museum of Art; the National Library of Australia Film Collection, Canberra; Pennsylvania State University, State College; and the Arts Council of Great Britain, London.

Upcoming exhibitions include a new restoration of VanDerBeek's "Movie-Drome" (1965) as part of *Signals: Video and Electronic Democracy* at the Museum of Modern Art, New York.

Alisha B. Wormsley (Pittsburgh, PA, USA) is an interdisciplinary artist and cultural producer. Wormsley views her art as a rebellion. In the same way being a Black womxn in America is an act of rebellion. Her work contributes to the imagining of the future of arts, science, and technology through the black womxn lens, challenging contemporary views of modern American life through whichever medium she feels is the best form of expression, creating an object, a sculpture, a billboard, performance, or film. The work is a bridge for social engagement, activism, redistribution of wealth, science fiction, public art and film and media to reveal lesser-known histories and fantasize about alternative futures. Wormsley's work has received a number of awards and grants to support programs namely the *Children of NAN* archive, *There Are Black People In The Future* and most recently *Sibyls Shrine*. Her work has been exhibited globally. Over the last few years, Wormsley has designed several public art initiatives including *Streaming Space*, a 24 foot pyramid with video and sound installed in

Pittsburgh's downtown Market Square, and *AWxAW*, a multimedia interactive installation and film commission at the Andy Warhol Museum. Wormsley created a public program out of her work, *There Are Black People In the Future*, which gives mini-grants to open up discourse around displacement and gentrification and was also awarded a fellowship with Monument Lab and the Goethe Institute. In 2020, Wormsley launched an art residency for Black creative mothers called *Sibyls Shrine*, which has received two years of support from the Heinz Endowments. Wormsley has an MFA in Film and Video from Bard College and currently is a Presidential Postdoctoral Research Fellow at Carnegie Mellon University to research and create work rooted in matriarchal leadership and mysticism in the African-American community.